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ABSTRACT

Originally passed in 1975, the Education for Handicapped Children Act (EHA or P.L. 94-142) provided an unprecedented legislative definition of parent involvement. Congress mandated that parents be included in the educational decision-making process concerning handicapped children. This paper summarizes parent involvement as defined by the EHA, reviews the literature on implementation of EHA's provision for parent involvement, and offers recommendations for principals' leadership in supporting parent involvement. Principals are advised to create a school climate conducive to parent involvement through parent induction programs and staff development. An 87-item bibliography is included. (LMI)

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Occasional Papers:

School Leadership and Education Reform

OP #4

School Leadership and Educational Reform: Parent Involvement, The Education for Handicapped Children Act, and the Principal

by Jane Clark Lindle

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SCHOOL LEADERSHIP AND EDUCATIONAL REFORM: PARENT INVOLVEMENT THE EDUCATION FOR HANDICAPPED CHILDREN ACT, AND THE PRINCIPAL

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SCHOOL LEADERSHIP AND EDUCATIONAL REFORM: PARENT INVOLVEMENT, THE EDUCATION FOR HANDICAPPED CHILDREN ACT, AND THE PRINCIPAL

by

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ABSTRACT

Originally passed in 1975, the Education for Handicapped Children Act (EHA or P. L. 94-142), provided a unprecedented, legislative definition of parent involvement. For the first time, Congress mandated that parents be included in the educational decision making process concerning handicapped children. In the more than 15 years since this radical definition of parent involvement was promulgated, a body of literature has developed which variously promotes parent involvement and records frustrations with implementation of this requirement. This paper reviews the literature and offers recommendations for principals' leadership in supporting parent involvement.

SCHOOL LEADERSHIP AND EDUCATIONAL REFORM: PARENT INVOLVEMENT, THE EDUCATION FOR HANDICAPPED CHILDREN ACT, AND THE PRINCIPAL

by

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There's a serpentine quality to the notion of parent involvement. Parent involvement is highly touted as one indicator of effective schools (Dunlap, Gleason and Waugh, 1982; Williams and Chavkin 1986); yet, teachers and administrators remain perplexed over how to improve parents' participation in their children's education (Hallinger and Murphy, 1987; Jones, 1991). Recently, various legislation and policies have been promulgated to restructure schools by being more inclusive of parents; however, few are as specific as Kentucky's requirement that at least two parents serve on very local school's decision making council. For the most part, parent involvement remains an amorphous activity; desirable, yet hard to implement.

One of the most ambitious attempts to legislate parent involvement is found in the Education for Handicapped Children Act (EHA or P. L. 94-142) first passed by the U. S. Congress in 1975. For more than 15 years, there have been considerable efforts to implement its requirement for parent involvement. Many of these attempts have been documented through personal accounts, research, and the professional literature. This paper summarizes parent involvement as defined by EHA, reviews the findings of the literature on implementation of EHA's provision for parent involvement, and suggests a leadership role for principals in supporting parent involvement for handicapped students.

An Overview of EHA

The Education for All Handicapped Children Act's (EHA or P. L. 94-142) primary purpose was to insure that all handicapped children would receive a free and appropriate education at public expense (Turnbull and Turnbull, 1978b). Six mechanisms were established for this: (1) the principle of "zero reject," which prevents public schools from excluding children due to the severity of their handicapping condition; (2) nondiscriminatory testing or the avoidance of cultural and linguistic bias in testing; (3) individualized education programs also known as IEPs; (4) least restrictive environment or a special educational placement as similar as possible to where the child would be place were s/he not handicapped; (5) due process; and (6) the requirement that parents be given an opportunity to participate in the development of their child's IEP (Freeman, Gavron and Williams, 1981; Gartner and Lipsky, 1987; Turnbull, Strickland and Brantley, 1978).

The language of EHA underscores the importance of parental input. The law specifically states that parent involvement is required throughout the process of educating a handicapped child and that this involvement begins with the "notice and consent" concepts of due process (Downs-Taylor and Landon, 1981; Gilhool, 1973; Hicks, 1985; Hoff, Fenton, Yoshida and Kaufman,

1978; Turnbull and Turnbull, 1978b). "Notice and consent" means that no child may be tested, diagnosed, and/or place in a special educational program without parental consent. The law further states that parents must be involved in the development of the individual education plan, or IEP. There is a clause which allows for extenuating cases where parents decide not to be involved in the IEP development, but only if documentation is provided to demonstrate that parents refused all invitations (Turnbull and Turnbull, 1978b).

When EHA became law, the spirit of reform was on access and accountability. Under P. L. 94-142, teacher and other professionals were required to include parents in decision-making about their handicapped child's education. The due process provision emphasized the importance of parental awareness about educational decisions concerning the testing and placement of their children. The provision of parents to be involved in IEP development reinforced the rights of parents to be concerned with educational decisions about their children. The intent was to allow parents to advocate priorities in the development and education of their children (Gilhool, 1973).

While a number of traditional roles for parents in schools have existed for decades, the inclusion of parents in educational decision making is a radical notion even today (Henderson et al, 1986; Sullivan, Brightman and Roberts, 1980; Williams and Chavkin, 1986). Numerous studies of the school involvement activities of normal children's parents have clearly enunciated the interest of parents and the resistance of school administrators and teachers to parental involvement in educational decision making roles (Becker and Epstein, 1981; Williams and Chavkin, 1986). Administrators and teachers, and many parents do not object to parents helping with homework, providing an audience for school activities or providing volunteer or financial support (Biklen and Searl, 1981; Chavkin and Williams, 1985; Williams and Chavkin, 1986). On the other hand, professional educators are generally reluctant to include most parents in making decisions about educational programs in general or for their own child in particular (Coons and Sugarman, 1978; and Williams and Chavkin, 1986).

While the parents of normal students have been involved in schools in limited traditional ways, for better than 15 years, parents of handicapped children have had legally mandated access to the educational programming for their children. What kinds of experiences have they had? What sort of participants have they been? How has the parent involvement provision of P. L. 94-142 been implemented? What leadership role exists for principals in implementing parent involvement for the education of the handicapped child? The following literature review attempts to answer these questions.

EHA's Parent Involvement Requirement: A Two-Pronged Review

There is a dual nature to this review. The requirements of P. L. 94-142 have produced two types of literature. One has focused on methods to encourage parents and professionals to work together. The other has focused on research to assess compliance in the development of IEPs. Thus, this review reports a literature of interpretations of the "spirit" of EHA and another body of published reports on the "letter" of EHA.

The Spirit of EHA: Interpretations of Parent Involvement.

Parent involvement has a long and volatile history in special education (Barsch, 1969). Without the advocacy and militant activities of parents of handicapped students and their organizations, P. L. 94-142 may have never developed, or may have taken a completely different form (Gartner and Lipsky, 1987; Turnbull and Turnbull, 1987b). The fact is, the law requires parent involvement, and a variety of interpretations of this requirement were developed for the implementation of EHA. These interpretations fit into the following four categories:

Orientation to Parental Competence: This literature shows that parents and professionals are alternately suspicious, intimidated, and insecure about the abilities and concerns of each other as well as themselves (Burggraf, 1979; Karnes and Esry, 1981; Pattison, 1982; Wright, 1982).

Bureaucratic Approaches: The bureaucratic approach to parent involvement emphasizes legal compliance with EHA at the cost of minimal interaction between parent and teacher. These pamphlets and articles adopt a functional perspective on parent-teacher relations (D'Alonzo, 1982; Downs-Taylor and Landon, 1981; Frank, 1983; Gerardi, Grohe, Benedict, and Coolidge, 1984; Hayes and Higgins, 1978; Jaffe and Snelbecker, 1982; Manley and Levy, 1981; Turnbull, Strickland and Brantley, 1978).

Political and Social Reform Roles: In these interpretations, roles for both parents and professionals emphasize political and social reform. These approaches to parental involvement have a foundation of democratic, participative decision-making found in the traditions of advocacy and adversarial relationships (Gerardi, Grohe, Benedict and Coolidge, 1984; Gilhool: 1973).

Comprehensive, Holistic Approaches: This literature has an interpretive emphasis on compliance within the context of the diversity of students, schools, parents, and professionals. Literature in this final category represents a more comprehensive, holistic approach to promoting and developing parent involvement (Burggraf, 1979; Idol, Paolucci-Whitcomb and Nevin, 1986; Karnes and Esry, 1981; Kroth, Otteni and Parks, 1982; Seligman, 1979; Wright, 1982; Yoshida and Gottlieb, 1977).

The categories are descriptive rather than mutually exclusive. Some of the literature falls into more than one of the categories. Others are exclusive to a particular category. For the purposes of this review, examples are provided below to illustrate the different categories.

Parents of the Handicapped: An Emphasis on Competence

There is a subtle trap inherent in the proposition that parents of handicapped children require special support and attention themselves (Gartner and Lipsky, 1987). The trap is that professionals may view the need for special support in parenting handicapped children as evidence of intrinsic incompetence (Turnbull and Turnbull, 1978a). For special educators, little comfort is available from the general educational literature about families and schools. The

general literature is characteristically "moralistic," representing the school's point of view with a "focus on pathology and deviance" in children and families (Lightfoot, 1978, p. 15). This moralistic and pathological theme is also quite evident in the literature on building partnerships with parents in special education (Gartner and Lipsky, 1987). These themes are found explicitly in reports, books, and essays written by parents and implicitly in government materials for parents.

Some of the explicit literature reports the reactions of minority parents to encounters with professionals (Davis and Heyl, 1980; Lowry, 1983; Rodriquez, 1981). The complaints range from a focus on social distance between professionals and minority parents to laments about the assertiveness, or lack of such, by these parents (Davis and Heyl, 1980; Rodriquez, 1981). Embedded in some of these charges are specific insinuations that somehow middle class parents would not, or do not, face the same problems with communicating with professionals (Lowry, 1983; Comer, 1980).

Yet, the most biting and sometimes poignant accounts of professional indifference are recorded by middle class parents (e.g. Barsch, 1969; Freeman, Gavron, and Williams, 1981; Gartner and Lipsky, 1987; Gerardi, Grohe, Benedict, and Coolidge, 19; Pattison, 1982; Turnbull and Turnbull, 1978a). These parents write and tell about feeling "put down" and demeaned by the professionals who work with their children (Pattison, 1982; Turnbull and Turnbull, 1978a).

Regardless of socio-economic status or race, parents report being marginalized in their efforts to participate. Frequently, they are prevented from entering the process by the superior attitudes of professionals (Sullivan, Brightman and Roberts, 1980).

Some of this demeaning approach is implicit in government and agency sponsored literature for parents. Assumptions that parents are to blame for their child's problems and handicapping conditions are found in materials produced for parents by states, school districts, and advocacy organizations. Many of the materials for parents of the handicapped tell parents how to dress, what to ask, even the exact words to say to teachers and administrators (Coordinating Council, 1987; Halpern and Parker-Crawford, 1981).

For example, the Co-ordinating Council for Handicapped Children (1987) suggested that parents "should dress in a professional manner with clothing that is simple, but dignified" (p. 5). On one level, this suggestion may be helpful for some parents in negotiating the bureaucracy. On the other hand, this statement is fraught with negative implications about the general suitability of most parents' typical behavior, taste, clothing, and social status.

This literature also attempts to confine the number of questions and limit the types of questions parents should ask. For example, Nye, Westling and Laten (1986) list questions for parents to use, such as this;

> Should we include in the objective [of the IEP] that my child be able to generalize these skills to the classroom and other school and home settings? (p. 31).

They imply that parents need to talk like teachers. Other authors more appropriately suggest that the burden of language and interpretation ought to be bourn by teachers (Seligman, 1979). Pattison (1982) suggested that teachers avoid "educationese" (p. 20).

Roit and Pfohl (1984) found that materials distributed by state departments of education are often difficult to comprehend. Using a variety of readability indices, they found these pamphlets were written at anywhere from fifth to eighth grade reading levels. They suggested that most parents with handicapped children cannot read or understand this literature, although the average adult reads at a ninth grade level (Roit and Pfohl, 1984). Roit and Pfohl (1984) based their conclusions on a 1980 report from the Educational Testing Service (ETS) which concluded that nearly three times as many Black and culturally different children as White were placed in special education (Roit and Pfohl, 1984, p. 497). Although data on the reading levels of these parents were not reported, Roit and Pfohl conjectured that many of these parents could not provide "informed consent" as required under EHA since the fifth to eighth grade readability was probably too high for them (Roit and Pfohl, 1984).

Even though Roit and Pfohl (1984) reported that the average adult reads at a ninth grade level, they did not suggest the possibility that this literature, written at the fifth to eighth grade level, may underestimate the reading and professional levels of some parents. The explicit complaints from parents of children with handicaps suggests the need for research explaining the impact of materials written at a fifth to eighth grade level on parent - professional relationships (Gartner and Lipsky, 1987; Turnbull and Turnbull, 1978a). There may be as many parents who find the reading level too simplistic as there are parents who find it too difficult.

Besides language problems, prescriptions for parent behavior, and reading level, there are other problems with parent materials. Some try to explain the complexity of the professional - parent relationship (e.g. Murphy and Della Corte, 1988). They counsel parents not to be defensive and to listen to professionals. There materials appear to attempt to control the parents' behavior and seem to overestimate the degree to which parents may require guidance to interact effectively with professionals (Gartner and Lipsky, 1987).

Professionals also are asked to be prepared for a difficult relationship with parents. The themes of intimidation, defensiveness, anger, frustration and hostility are reflected in these explanations (e.g. "Parent-Teacher Conferences," 1987; Freeman, Gavron and Williams, 1981; Gerardi, Grohe, Benedict and Coolidge, 1984; Pattison, 1982; Power, 1985; Seligman, 1979; Turnbull and Turnbull, 1978a). Suggestions for handling these issues are to avoid confrontation by sticking to a script of questions or suggestions for parent or professional behavior (e.g. "Parent-Teacher Conferences," 1987; Murphy and Della Corte, 1988; Turnbull and Turnbull, 1978a). These scripts were developed to comply with the letter of the law. But, because they assume problems with parents attitude and competence, they may actually prevent genuine parent involvement due to the negative expectations they may create for everyone.

In this category of literature, the interpretation focuses on parental competence and probably decreases the likelihood for genuine parental involvement. Parents are unlikely to be willing participants because the materials for parents are alternately intimidating or degrading. Materials

for professionals create equally negative pictures of parents. Both sets of materials cast parents as part of the problem. If parents are part of the problem, what expertise could they offer? If parents are incompetent, isn't their involvement burdensome to a classroom teacher and possibly harmful to the child's education? The problematic focus on parents' competence may be an almost imperceptible, but powerful impedance to supporting parent involvement as required by the spirit of EHA.

Bureaucratic Approaches to Parental Participation

The literature in this category is strictly functional. These articles are "how-to" manuals which provide step-by-step directions that interpret the "legalese" of EHA and its regulations.

Written primarily for teachers, the articles typically focus on how to develop IEPs (e.g. D'Alonzo, 1982; Downs-Taylor and Landon, 1981; Frank, 1983; Gerardi, Grohe, Benedict, and Coolidge, 1984; Hayes and Higgins, 1978; Jaffe and Snelbecker, 1982; Manley and Levy, 1981; Turnbull, Strickland and Brantley, 1978). With rare exception, these directions fail to address how or when to involve parents, even though EHA requires parent participation.

A few articles concerned with EHA have explained the legal relationship between parents and professionals (e.g. Hoff, Fenton, Yoshida and Kaufman, 1978; Turnbull and Turnbull, 1978b; Wolf and Troup, 1980). In this literature, professionals are urged in general terms to help parents participate in the process. Usually, they recommend more contact with parents and a quasi-educational plan for instructing parents about their rights and duties.

Absent from the legalistic literature is the suggestion that parents have information important for designing an IEP. Furthermore, the assumption that teachers must develop plans to instruct plans to instruct parents in their rights and duties reduces the possibility for collaborative consultation in which the teacher and parent are equals who freely share information. Asking teachers to take on the role of expert who dispenses information from a superior vantage point precludes any opportunity for a mutual education process which can be a way of defining parent involvement (Brightman and Sullivan, 1980).

Reform Roles for Parents and Professionals

In this category, instructing parents about their rights and duties under EHA has expanded to an evangelical zeal for empowering parents to advocate for their children. The responsibility for professionals to communicate with parents is extended as a challenge to professionals to equip parents with the knowledge necessary to actively lobby on their children's behalf (e.g. Fanning, 1977; Kroth, Otteni and Parks, 1982; Wright, 1982). These articles recognize that historically schools have generally done a poor job in educating exceptional children and developing productive relations with parents (Fanning, 1977; Pattison, 1982; Yoshida and Gottlieb, 1977). Paradoxically, the school is also seen as a source for engaging parents, jointly with teachers, in advocacy for the child (D'Alonzo, 1982; Gilhool, 1973; Fanning, 1977; Pattison, 1982; Seligman, 1979; Turnbull and Turnbull, 1978a, 1978b; Wright, 1982). Although some authors focus on the militant application of due process for children (e.g., Hayes and Higgins, 1978; Hicks, 1985),

most suggest common understanding and a united approach to parent involvement in promoting the rights of all handicapped people --- children and adults.

Although they are encouraged to be advocates for children, some teachers believe that P. L. 94-142 does not define an advocate role for teachers (Vaughn, 1986). In fact, these complaints attest that teacher advocacy often needs to be invoked against parents who may not be capable of making appropriate educational decisions (Vaughn, 1986, p. 2). When parents do assume an advocacy role, they are frequently labeled nuisances by educators (Biklen and Searl, 1981; Lowry, 1983). The focus on advocacy roles, easily risks antagonism between parents and teachers. Because this literature promotes the involvement of parents in social reform activities which may ignore the classroom, or the IEP, it also risks avoiding dialogue between parent and professional on the student's immediate needs. Opportunities for teacher and parent to consult on the child's education may be occupied with general issues, such as facilities access or future work opportunities. Although important, these issues are somewhat tangential to the immediate development of a child's IEP. Given this risk, the advocacy approach may create barriers for the child or for communication between teacher and parent.

Comprehensive Approaches to Parent Involvement

These approaches are more integrative than those previously described in suggesting parent-professional interactions. Frequently presented as models, they address a variety of issues emanating form the diversity of parents, students, and teachers. The spectrum of human competence, both of parents and professionals is recognized in these approaches. A striking feature of this literature is the recognition that parent-professional relationships cannot be described as a rigid list of behaviors, questions or suggestions. Descriptions of several of these models follow.

Much of this literature begins with a rationale for parent involvement in special education. Beyond the legal rights of parents written into the law (Gilhool, 1973), this literature acknowledges the advantages of parent involvement. Parents are seen as knowledgeable experts about their children's lives (Biklen and Searl, 1981; Dudley-Marling and Rosenberg, 1979). They also can be valuable information sources about their children (Gilhool, 1973; Seligman, 1979; Turnbull, Strickland and Brantley, 1978; Yoshida and Gottlieb, 1977) and are asked to collaborate in their children's education (Kroth, Otteni and Parks, 1982; Seligman, 1979; Wright, 1982). Parents are expected to learn about the school and the child's handicapping conditions through their participation in IEP development (Biklen and Searl, 1981; Dudley-Marling and Rosenberg, 1979). Parents also are monitors of IEP implementation (Biklen and Searl, 1981; Sullivan, Brightman and Roberts, 1980).

Counseling models place the burden of facilitating the relationship on counselors. Although most of the focus is on the needs of the child, attention has broadened to the impact of the child's special needs on the family (Lowry, 1983). The role of the professional is to support the parent rather than vice versa (Burggraf, 1979; Karnes and Esry, 1981; Seligman, 1979). There is no one "best" way to accomplish this since different parents require different types of support. Professionals are expected to recognize the parent's psychological needs (Burggraf, 1979;

D'Alonzo, 1982; Karnes and Esry, 1989; Seligman, 1979; Wright, 1982). Relationships are seen as integrative, with power, leadership and support shifting between the parent and the professional in true collaboration (Downs-Taylor and Landon, 1981; Idol, Paolucci-Whitcomb and Nevin, 1986; Wright, 1982).

The participatory approach depends on the promotion and debate of ideas which is sometimes associated with adversarial behavior (Gilhool, 1973). Participative decision making, in this context, represents the traditions of democratic governance. Decisions are made once all viewpoints have been aired, but this approach can have some political overtones. Besides the political factors, the "cognitive abilities and psychological concerns" of participants may be the most salient factor in participative decision making for the purposes of EHA (Wood, 1984, p. 56). These mediating factors may limit the applicability of the participative approach to parents and professionals with compatible "cognitive abilities and psychological concerns" or even similar political agenda.

Through the "Mirror Model" of parent involvement, (Kroth, et. al., 1982) illustrated the variation in abilities and concerns that may be found among parents and professionals. This model, based on the assumption that parents and professionals represent heterogeneous groups with a variety of needs and abilities, posits services along a continuum. Some services (e.g., timely and regular communication with the teacher) are required by only a few. Thus, communications between parents and teachers are controlled by the spectrum of needs and abilities presented by both the parent and the professional.

The assumption of the Mirror Model parallels the "Balance Theory" on school-community relations (Litwak and Meyer, 1974) which assumes that the variance among schools and communities requires different levels of [a] intimacy, [b] information, and [c] communication mechanisms for effective parent involvement. These levels are determined by family structures (education, socio-economic status, supportiveness, etc.) as well as by the corresponding school's climate and culture. Using the Balance Theory, a full range of participation approaches are available for the parent teacher partnership (Lindle and Boy, 1991).

The comprehensive models and approaches in this category offer a broad interpretation of EHA. Because they realistically recognize diversity in parent-professional interests and view professional-parent relationships as collaborative, parent involvement is encouraged. Diversity among parents, professionals and students is both expected and valued. This allows for educational decision making to proceed, based on mutual identification of issues and problems, with each party enabling the other as much as possible (Idol, Paolucci-Whitcomb and Nevin, 1986). Unfortunately, few studies have investigated the effects of theses model.

The "Letter" of EHA: Studying the Compliance with IEP Requirements

Research on EHA's impact has been narrowly defined. It has focused mainly on IEP requirements with some inquiry about parent participation. An emerging focus in the literature is policy analyses on the overall impact of EHA. Teachers' attitudes, parent perceptions and the policy analyses are reviewed below.

Teachers' Attitudes and Compliance with EHA

The research reveals a dismal picture. Although IEPs are usually described as a natural extension of practice in the education of students with handicaps (Hayes and Higgins, 1978; Hughes, 1980), teachers typically view IEPs negatively (Dudley-Maring, 1985; Gerardi, Grohe, Benedict and Coolidge, 1984; Margolis and Truesdell, 1987; Morgan and Rhode, 1983; Yoshida, Fenton, Kaufman, and Maxwell, 1978). Teachers customarily write IEPs to fulfill the law rather than to plan instructional activities (Dudley-Maring, 1985; Margolis and Truesdell, 1987; Morgan and Rhode, 1983). They are inclined to feel that the IEP objectives are inappropriate and that few resources are available to support the IEP objectives (Margolis and Truesdell, 1987; Morgan and Rhode, 1983).

This research strongly suggests that despite legal requirements, parents not only tend to be excluded from IEP development, but are not welcome (Dudley-Maring, 1985; Gerardi, Grohe, Benedict and Coolidge, 1984; Morgan and Rhode, 1983; Yoshida, Fenton, Kaufman, and Maxwell, 1978). Parents find themselves ignored when they are present (Halpern, 1982; Sullivan, Brightman and Roberts, 1980). Surprisingly, neither researchers, nor teachers, have suggested that IEP objectives might be more appropriate if parents were included in the process. Researchers have not suggested examining the relationship between the quality and usefulness of IEPs and the extent of parental participation in their development.

Parent Perceptions of Involvement

The research in this area consists mainly of surveys or interviews of parents about their participation in implementing of all aspects of EHA, such as their views of the services given their children and their awareness of their rights and responsibilities. Particular attention is paid to the IEP conference (Cone, DeLawyer and Wolfe, 1985; Dembinski and Mauser, 1977; Dickson and DiPaola, 1980; Hoff, Fenton, Yoshida and Kaufman, 1978; Leyser, 1985; Scanlon, Arick and Phelps, 1981; Wolf and Troup, 1980). Only one study observed interactions at IEP conferences (Goldstein, Strickland, Turnbull and Curry, 1980). Only were two experiments. One of these investigated the degree of contact between school and parent which was necessary to improve parent participation in IEP conferences (Wolf and Troup, 1980). The other examined differences in the perceptions of teachers and mothers relative to successful and unsuccessful IEP meetings (Opie, Tse, Bissell and McBride, 1984). Fro the most part, these studies reveal that parents frequently are not fully informed in the educational decision-making process; and thus, IEP conferences are often conducted in manner which violates EHA criteria (Hoff, Fenton, Yoshida and Kaufman, 1985; Goldstein, Strickland, Turnbull and Curry, 1980; Leyser, 1985). In addition, when parents do not attend conferences, IEPs are simply sent home for a signature, which also violates the law (Goldstein, Strickland, Turnbull and Curry, 1980).

Low attendance by parents at IEP meetings is a pervasive problem (Goldstein, Strickland, Turnbull and Curry, 1980; Leyser, 1985; Polifka, 1981; Scanlon, Arick and Phelps, 1981; Wolf and Troup, 1980). Leyser (1985) found that parents preferred regular notes or phone calls instead of conferences. Wolf and Troup (1980) found that notes and phone calls increased attendance at IEP conferences.

When parents attend conferences, they generally say little (Goldstein, Strickland, Turnbull and Curry, 1980). This may be due to problems of anxiety, intimidation, and competence, or to conflicts which arise during conferences (Dembinski and Mauser, 1977; Dickson and DiPaola, 1980; Hoff, Fenton, Yoshida and Kaufman, 1978; Leyser, 1985; Opie, Tse, Bissell and McBride, 1984). Generally, researchers question the quality of IEPs produced from conferences where parents are passive and acquiescent.

Some parents report that negative experiences at IEP conferences have prompted them to take more initiatives (Halpern, 1982). They spend more time gathering information to become more able and accepted at IEP meetings (Sullivan, Brightman and Roberts, 1980). They also find themselves doing more of the monitoring of IEP implementation themselves rather than relying on school personnel (Brightman and Sullivan, 1980).

The research indicates that parents do not usually initiate advocacy or due process proceedings (Cone, DeLawyer and Wolfe, 1985) which may mean that advocacy rarely occurs. Teachers tend not to encourage or enable parents to be advocates (Cone, DeLawyer and Wolfe, 1985; Dembinski and Mauser, 1977; Hoff, Fenton, Yoshida and Kaufman, 1978). On one level, these findings might indicate that parents are generally satisfied with the services they receive (Leyser, 1985). On the other hand, parents may simply be unaware of the alternatives (Dickson and DiPaola, 1980; Hoff, Fenton, Yoshida and Kaufman, 1978; Polifka, 1981). These findings contradict the more zealous literature on the "new" relationship between parents and schools which suggested roles for parents and professionals in social reform. Also, the folklore from special education directors about parental challenges and appeals to placement appears to go unreported in this literature.

Some literature does report that parents are more likely to push for less restrictive placements than many professionals would recommend (Halpern, 1982; Sullivan, Brightman and Roberts, 1980). Yet, these negotiations, though abetted by the existence of legal recourse, usually have not been challenged litigiously (Halpern, 1982). The existence of due process under P. L. 94-142 is often construed as an underlying threat in parent - professional negotiations (Nissen, 1984). The better acquainted parents are with the school, the more likely they are to engage in extended negotiations (Halpern and Parker-Crawford, 1981). Those parents who do initiate legal proceedings are acting in a two-parent team, are well-educated with an adequate understanding of their rights under EHA, and are emotionally capable of sustaining a lengthy court case (Sullivan, Brightman and Roberts, 1980).

A considerable research base indicates that children whose parents teach them at home often make significant educational gains. However, the studies reviewed here found that parents were not encouraged to help their children with schoolwork at home. Even when parents requested work to do with their children, teachers were unresponsive (Dembinski and Mauser, 1977; Goldstein, Strickland, Turnbull and Curry, 1980). Teachers were either unaware of the research supporting an educational role for parents at home, and/or they were recalcitrant in following the letter and the spirit of EHA.

The Evaluation of EHA as Parent-Oriented Legislation

The Education for All Handicapped Children Act is a complex piece of social legislation which raises an incredible tangle of issues requiring evaluation. Only a few pieces of policy analysis and evaluation have been published.

Most analyses suggest that the legislation is parent-oriented (Fanning, 1977; Gartner and Lipsky, 1987; Pattison, 1982; Turnbull and Turnbull, 1978b). Provisions for parent involvement permeate EHA's requirements in due process and decision-making (Gartner and Lipsky, 1987; Turnbull and Turnbull, 1978b). The few analysts who expressed confusion about the intent of including parents (Gerardi, Grohe, Benedict and Coolidge, 1984; Freeman, Gavron and Williams, 1981), nevertheless stated that parents should be informed. But these analysts were skeptical that parents could, or should have an active role in the their children's educational program. Such an interpretation fosters an "expert" rather than "collaborative" orientation to parent-professional consultation. This restrictive interpretation views parents as spectators whose primary role is to attend conferences and sign forms to indicate agreement.

One of the articles reviewed simply ignored the relationship of parent involvement to the impact of EHA. Altschuld and Downer (1980) recommended an evaluation plan for EHA which failed to consider the effects of parent involvement. Their proposed evaluation questions focused on instructional delivery, compliance with due process, and cost benefit analysis.

The annual reports to Congress on the implementation of EHA have been found wanting on a number of counts. The reports rely heavily on summary statistics of children served, but monitoring of program quality or service delivery has been lacking in some eyes (Greenburg, 1989). The annual reports do little to summarize or describe parent involvement under P. L. 94-142.

Although considerable controversy exists about the interpretation and implementation of any of EHA's requirements, we have achieved a vague degree of compliance (Gartner and Lipsky, 1987). For example, all fifty states have an approved implementation plan, and more handicapped students are served by the public schools. The EHA's general purpose of serving handicapped children has been accomplished; however, their parents have often been excluded from becoming actively involved in the education of their children. There is virtually no evidence that parent-professional relationships have improved through EHA.

Room for leadership in parent involvement

Some literature about P. L. 94-142 is directed specifically at principals. The general concern about the principal's role in implementing EHA has had two dimension. The first dimension is a legalistic interpretation of the EHA provisions for the principal. The second dimension concentrates on the level of principals' knowledge about special education. Although there is not much literature on principals and P. L. 94-142, one review of that literature was found for this paper. These two dimensions and the extant literature review are discussed as follows.

The legal concerns related to the principals are due to vagarities in P. L. 94-142. Some state legislatures failed to specify responsibilities for implementing the requirement for the "least restrictive environment" (Leitz and Kaiser, 1979). The operating assumption has been that as the leader of a building, the principal is the local administrator responsible for compliance with EHA (Schuster, 1985).

Principals are variously advised to avoid lawsuits by complying with due process, maintaining consistency in disciplining the special education students, and assuring that special educational placement are made in a timely fashion (McCabe and Capruzzi, 1982; National Association of Elementary Principals, 1983; Nissen, 1984; O'Reilly and Sayler, 1985). Principals are also seen as mediators and arbitrators of disputes between regular and special education teachers or parents and educational personnel (Nissen, 1984; "Taking a Family Perspective," 1981). This legalistic approach rarely suggest that lawsuits might be avoided by facilitating the parent involvement provisions of P. L. 94-142.

The research on principals' knowledge about special education reveals mixed results. Some research shows that principals are generally positive and knowledgeable about special education (Cline, 1981; O'Reilly and Squires, 1985; Prillaman, 1983). In fact, in Cline's study, most of the 91 principals surveyed were more likely to include certain categories of handicapped children in the mainstream than many of the 35 experts survey for the study (p. 174). It might seem that some parents would find solace in such a principal. But another study of 100 New York principals founding them tending toward more restrictive placements for mildly handicapped students and were not knowledgeable about educational programs (Reehill, 1982). Georgia principals were found to be more knowledgeable about P. L. 94-142 than they shared with teachers (Bonds and Lindsey, 1980).

The review of the literature on principals and EHA implementation (Schuster, 1985) failed to describe the principal's relationship with the parent involvement provisions of P. L. 94-142. Despite Schuster's recommendations that principals needed to redefine their roles sunder the law, serve as advocates, and meet the standards of due process, he did not suggest a place for the principals in establishing the parent involvement provisions. He did suggest that principals could support parents by calming their fears. Schuster also suggested that principals with a participative leadership style could facilitate educational decision making with regular and special educators. Unfortunately, Schuster did not include parents in the participative grouping. This omission is not unique to Schuster.

A few articles advise principals to maintain distance from both teachers and parents. Focusing on conflicts relating to special treatment for exceptional children, this literature emphasizes the classic conflict of individual good versus the good of the majority (Brennan and Brennan, 1988; Guthrie and Reed, 1986). Despite sometimes irresolvable conflict, a "marginal" position can lead to rather weak, reactive, and situational decision-making (Brennan and Brennan, 1988).

In contrast to the distancing advice, a select group of authors encourage principals to assume a supportive role (Witcher, 1989; Schuster, 1985). Principals who understand the grief process can facilitate parental participation in the educational decision making process (Witcher, 1989).

Unfortunately, parents find administrators an unreliable resource. Administrators seem unresponsive to parents concerns about their handicapped children. The parents report the principal is too busy to supply satisfaction concerning the educational program (Brightman and Sullivan, 1980).

The literature on parent involvement regarding P. L. 94-142, in general, is fairly extensive. Specific references to administrators and their role in facilitating parent involvement are few. Yet, the general literature shows that relationships between parents and schools, and even the implementation of EHA could be improved. Even though most of the focus concerning the parent involvement provisions in P. L. 94-142 have been on teachers and other multi-disciplinary team members, the very absence of the school administrator may illustrate room for leadership in facilitating parent involvement under EHA. What could the principal do to improve parent involvement?

Recommendations and Conclusion

The recommendations for a principal's role in implementing the parent involvement provisions of EHA, do not deviate from recommendations for developing good school parent relations in general education. Perhaps the most important difference between the usual concerns in general education over parent involvement and the particular concerns about implementing P. L. 94-142, is that parents are required to be involved in educational decision making under EHA. The leadership role for the principal should emphasize enabling parents to be included in the educational decision making process.

A lot of the literature on parent involvement in general education begins with the climate of the school (Williams and Chavkin, 1986). The requirements of EHA intensifies the need for a climate conducive to parent involvement. In the case of special education parents, principals must set the expectation that these parents have more than an invitation to be a part of the educational process. Special education parents are an integral part of the education of handicapped children. Beyond expectations, principals can facilitate integration of these parents into the educational process.

Perhaps the most critical activity for improving the climate for parent involvement under EHA would be the initiation of an induction program for parents. Most principals assume that new educational personnel will require support to participate fully in the educational activities of the school. Special education parents require an orientation process similar to what other educational personnel receive (Henderson, et al, 1986). Some of the similarities my include the provision of a mentor. Many parents have suggested that being with another parent during the initial phases of the identification and planning for their child's special education would have been helpful (Lowry, 1983). Parents tend to rely on other parents for specific information about the educational process (Brightman and Sullivan, 1980), so parents could help in a number of ways in the orientation process. Parents could provide transportation for each other; they could run support groups; and they could baby-sit for one another. All of these contributions by parents would remove a number of barriers to involvement cited in the literature. Establishing a welcoming orientation for parents would remove many of the obstacles to parent involvement, but the relationship between professionals and parents also be thawed out.

The principal's role in fostering positive professional and parent relations is more traditional than radical. General education literature suggests that most educational professionals require specific in-service education concerning their roles with parents. Despite considerable literature on models of parent involvement and school community relations, most teacher education programs do not include preservice coursework on parent involvement. The educational process for normal, or handicapped, children no longer concentrates merely on the child's development. More and more communities are recognizing that the ecology of education includes the family and social service agencies. Unfortunately, an ecological view of education goes beyond the preservice preparation of most educational professionals. Principals have a major role in providing the staff development necessary to expand the knowledge base of teachers, and other professionals, beyond a classroom-bounded understanding of children's education and development.

Unlike the focus on the principal's legal responsibilities for disciplining special education students, the leadership role of principals for encouraging parent involvement under EHA is a two-fold educational role. The education of parents can be accomplished through an induction program which enlists parents as educators and mentors for each other. The education of professional personnel is an extension of most principals' current staff development responsibilities. Principals' leadership for EHA could change the battleground of parent-professional involvement into a satisfying environment for enhancing handicapped children's education.

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